United Nations E/AC.51/1998/L.7/Add.26

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
18 June 1998

Original: English

**Committee for Programme and Coordination**
**Thirty-eighth session**
1-26 June 1998 (part I)

**Draft report**

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**Addendum**

## Coordination questions: report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (item 5 (a))

### Annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for 1997

1. At its 8th and 9th meetings, on 4 June 1998, the Committee considered the annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for 1997 (E/1998/21). The Committee welcomed the new Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, who introduced the report.

**Discussion**

2. While appreciation was expressed for the report, the view was expressed that it was too descriptive and not sufficiently analytical. Previous decisions of the Committee were recalled whereby it was requested that the ACC report identify key questions, define problems, cite lessons learned and, wherever possible, make specific recommendations for the Committee's consideration, thus enabling the Committee to play a more meaningful coordination role. It was also reiterated that there was need for greater interaction between the Committee and the organizations and agencies of the system, and reference was made to the joint Committee for Programme and Coordination/Administrative Committee on Coordination meetings, discontinued by force of General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996.

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3. Views were expressed that some issues addressed in the context of the work of ACC mentioned in the report did not correspond to the programme priorities established by the General Assembly in the current medium-term plan. Views were also expressed that ACC was a body with membership composed of the United Nations, its funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, which had their own intergovernmental bodies that set priorities for their own respective medium-term plans. Thus, the main objective of ACC, in the context of its coordinating role, was to focus on the interlinkages between the various programme areas of work and thus address the overall priorities of the organizations of the system. It was also explained that priorities had to be assessed over time, and that the work programme of ACC in any given year had to respond to the particular issues being given special attention by the central intergovernmental bodies, such as reform or the follow-up to a given international conference.

4. It was pointed out that the reform process initiated in the United Nations had a broad impact on the United Nations system as a whole. Therefore, the actions that will be implemented should respect fully the relevant mandates, decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly. In this context, the ACC inter-agency machinery should play an important role in pooling capabilities and resources throughout the system, in further rationalizing the division of labour and in avoiding duplication to respond effectively to changing international requirements and increase the efficiency of operations of the United Nations organizations. In this regard, an ACC publication on common themes of the reform processes in the United Nations system was looked forward to.

5. The need for frequent briefings by ACC to relevant intergovernmental bodies was emphasized, since it was believed that this would result in greater interaction between the Committee and the Member States. Such an interaction would facilitate a two-way flow of information and views.

6. Views were expressed concerning the great importance attached to a number of issues mentioned in the report. However, it was stated that greater emphasis on development activities would lead to resolution of many issues that arise from economic deprivation.

7. In relation to section II of the report and to the follow-up to international conferences and summits, it was noted that no reference was made to the implementation and follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development.

8. With regard to the reference in the ACC report to human rights as a cross-cutting issue, it was pointed out that in the course of the discussion on this issue in document A/52/303, strong views were expressed that if there were any cross-cutting issue in the United Nations, it ought to be development. It was recalled further that the General Assembly, in its consensus resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997, deleted portions of the document A/52/303 that referred to human rights as a cross-cutting issue, and, therefore, ACC should fully respect this resolution. Views were expressed acknowledging the textual change to resolution 52/220. However, strong views were also expressed that human rights continued to be a cross-cutting issue throughout the United Nations system. Attention was also drawn to resolution 52/12 A, which dealt specifically with the programme of reform of the United Nations and the respect for mandates covered by the medium-term plan.

9. With regard to the issue of African economic recovery and development, it was recalled that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa should be pursued as the implementation arm of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa, as called for by the General Assembly. It was considered that the linkage of the Special Initiative with the New Agenda needed to be qualitatively strengthened. Paragraph 7 of the conclusions of the mid-term review of the implementation of the New Agenda,

adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 51/32 of 6 December 1996, was recalled. It stated that the System-wide Initiative on Africa was complementary to the New Agenda and was designed to facilitate its implementation and the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits as they related to Africa and that the Special Initiative might also become an impetus for the implementation of all elements of the New Agenda.[1] It was also recalled that paragraph 191 of the Agenda for Development (General Assembly resolution 51/240, annex) stated that the United Nations system had a major role to play in coordinating and implementing activities that address the critical situation in Africa, including through the implementation of the New Agenda. It was therefore pointed out that the references in section V of the ACC report should refer to the implementation of the New Agenda through the Special Initiative, especially since the General Assembly decided in its resolution 51/32 to conduct a final review and appraisal of the implementation of the New Agenda in 2002.

10. In relation to section VI of the report, on operational activities for development, the view was expressed that the triennial review of operational activities for development that would be prepared by the Secretary-General under the guidance of ACC should address all dimensions of development, including, among others, humanitarian activities.

11. With respect to the programme of work of ACC, the view was expressed that attention should continue to be given to the full implementation of United Nations global conferences and summits as a framework for addressing developmental issues, including poverty eradication.

12. Support was expressed for the measures being undertaken within the United Nations system in providing assistance to countries invoking Article 50 of the Charter of the United Nations. It was indicated that many of those countries were doubly penalized by the application of sanctions, and enquiries were made as to whether the ad hoc expert group meeting called for in General Assembly resolution 52/162 of 15 December 1997 with a view to developing a possible methodology for assessing the consequences actually incurred by such States as a result of preventive or enforcement measures had yet been convened. Information was requested on its outcome.

13. It was noted that the members of ACC had pledged to give special attention to the needs and rights of street children and refugee and internally displaced children, and it was emphasized that ACC should also pay due attention to the needs of children under foreign occupation.

14. Appreciation was expressed for the attention being given by ACC to the system's relations with civil society. Views were also expressed that ACC had addressed the subject at a time when the General Assembly had not reached agreement on a definition for civil society. It was recalled that civil society groups operated within the jurisdiction of Member States, and it was noted that ACC should keep this in mind in considering mechanisms for improving relationships with civil society. It was also stated that relationships with the church were of crucial importance, particularly in efforts at reconciliation and peace building, and it was suggested that this element of civil society should not be forgotten as organizations of the system seek to strengthen the relationship with civil society. Views were expressed that the main focus of the discussions of ACC had been on the significance for the system as a whole of the growing involvement of civil society groups in the work of the various organizations of the system under modalities which differed from organization to organization, as directed by the respective government and legislative bodies.

15. The definition and use of the term "sustainable development" in annex III to the ACC report, was questioned. It was noted that the United Nations global conferences had defined

the relationship between economic growth and sustainable development, which was also reflected in the medium-term plan and the Agenda for Development. In replying to the explanation given by the ACC secretariat that sustainable development was the concept used at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the implementation of Agenda 21, it was stressed again that the concept "sustainable development" was defined in paragraph 23 of Assembly resolution S/19-2 as follows: "Economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development". It was further noted that the reference to sustainable development should have recalled that definition that was endorsed by the Assembly. The view was also expressed that the appendix focused on national and regional operations needed for the implementation of the commitments made in Agenda 21, without reference to the required efforts by the international community for the realization of those commitments.

16. With respect to administrative questions, the priority attention given to the issue of the security and safety of United Nations system staff and associated personnel in the field was welcomed, and it was stated that Member States should take the necessary action to ensure the safety of United Nations staff, including early implementation of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. In this regard, the view that the support of Governments should be enlisted in the implementation of the system-wide security policies was welcomed. On the question of the conditions of service and application of the Noblemaire principle, support was expressed for the application of the Noblemaire principle. It was considered that the recent studies of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) suggested that the requirements necessary to improve conditions of service had been met, and it remained for all Member States to support them. Views were expressed that the United Nations common system still remained competitive enough, taking into account its overall scope of conditions of service, and recent studies by ICSC proved that. It was also stressed that ACC should undertake a review of the ratio between permanent and fixed-term appointments on posts subject to geographical distribution, with a view to establishing common recruitment policies.

17. With respect to paragraph 4 in the appendix, in which it was suggested that the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development was political, it was stressed that in resolution S/19-2 it was stated that the Commission had a role to play in assessing the challenges of globalization as they relate to sustainable development and that it should promote policies that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability and should provide for integrated consideration of linkages, both among sectors and between sectoral and cross-sectoral aspects of Agenda 21, while avoiding repetition of work undertaken by other relevant forums (paras. 130 and 131).

18. In providing clarifications with regard to some of the comments made, the secretariat indicated that all observations would be taken into account in the preparation of future reports. The secretariat also indicated its readiness to provide systematic briefings to members of the Committee, in cooperation with representatives of United Nations agencies and bodies.

**Conclusions**

19. The Committee took note of the annual overview report of ACC and requested that future reports be more analytical and highlight problems encountered. They should also include a full listing of other system-wide reports before intergovernmental bodies relevant to the issues dealt with in the annual report. The Committee reiterated that ACC, in carrying out its primary task of strengthening coordination of activities of the United Nations system,

should focus on the strategic objectives established in the Charter, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the medium-term plans of the organizations of the system.[2]

20. The Committee also recommended that ACC work towards the preparation, in each programme area of broad inter-agency concern, of strategic policy papers indicating issues to be addressed, coordination problems being encountered, what role each agency and/or organization should play and areas where intergovernmental guidance is required.

21. The Committee recommended that ways should be found to analyse and bring to its attention the results of the work of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, through the annual overview report of ACC, on issues dealt with by the Committee within its coordination mandate. In this context, the Committee emphasized the need for frequent briefings by ACC to relevant intergovernmental bodies, which would result in greater interaction between the ACC and Member States. Such an interaction would facilitate a two-way flow of information and views.

22. The Committee welcomed the role being played by ACC to bring about improved management effectiveness and policy coherence in the work of the United Nations system, including at the country level. It looked forward to reviewing the publication under preparation on the common themes guiding reform processes within the system.

*Notes*

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 48*, para. 44.

[2] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 16*, paras. 333 and 335.